THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Pawan Hans Helicopters Limited (PHHL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with M/s. CHC Helicopters International Inc. (CHII) of Canada, on 07.06.2002. The MoU, *inter-alia*, envisages CHII assistance to PHHL in upgrading its maintenance facilities and further improving its operational and management systems through induction of state-of-the-art technology. It would also help in providing business opportunities to PHHL through possible operation of its helicopters abroad, and increasing revenue due to the upgraded maintenance facilities.

(d) and (e) The Government has deferred a decision on disinvestment of Government equity in PHHL for the time being.

**Joint venture by GAIL in CNG retailing**

*328. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL) has decided to form a joint venture with a civic body in Gujarat for retail distribution of Compressed Natural Gas;

(b) if so, the salient features of this joint venture agreement;

(c) whether GAIL plans to expand its distribution network by entering into joint ventures in other parts of the country where they have supply terminals/pipelines; and

(d) if so, the locations identified for future joint ventures for CNG retailing?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS(SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) for the formation of a joint venture company

for distribution of natural gas and auto LPG in cities of Andhra Pradesh. Initially, Hyderabad/Secunderabad have been identified for dispensing auto LPG by the proposed Joint Venture Company.

GAIL will consider city gas distribution including CNG in other cities after establishing technical feasibility and economic viability of the respective projects.

**Amount locked in litigation**

*329. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the news-item captioned "Rs.10,000 crore locked in tax litigation" which appeared in the 'Business Standard' dated 27th May, 2002;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to liquidate the huge mounting arrears of cases pertaining to tax litigation?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The news report discusses the appointment of a panel of lawyers to conduct customs and excise cases in High Courts. This is a matter of discussion between the Department of Revenue and the Law Ministry.

(c) Liquidating arrears of cases is a continuing process involving reforms in the tax structure, simplifying laws and procedures, setting up of new forums for disposal of cases, etc. It is Government's constant endeavour to bring down arrears of cases.

**Financial package for coffee and tea growers**

*330. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have rescheduled the loans availed by coffee and tea growers and have put two year moratorium on repayment of principal amount;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;